

SCHAUMBURG, IL - Recent allegations that a congressman inappropriately interacted online with a 16-year-old congressional page represent another example of the pressing need to provide parents with the information and resources they need to protect their children from internet predators.

In April, Congresswoman Melissa Bean (IL-08), a national leader on the issue of internet safety, introduced HR 4982, the *SAFER NET Act*, which would improve access to information on internet safety and raise awareness about predators and other dangers lurking on the web.

Bean has provided internet safety tips to parents and kids in public forums across the 8th District, but believes it is important to educate families on a national scale. For instance, parents are advised to not let children keep personal computers or webcams in their rooms and to monitor their children's internet usage.

Congresswoman Bean's *SAFER NET* bill would not only provide a primary clearinghouse of information where parents can educate themselves on basic internet technology and safety practices, but it would also establish a public awareness campaign on the scale of the "Just Say No" to drugs campaign that would teach kids how to "just say no" to providing personal information about themselves to strangers on the internet.

"If anything positive can come from this shameful episode, it is the possibility that parents will have a new understanding of the dangers kids face on the internet, and that Congress will be motivated to pass comprehensive internet safety legislation," Bean said. "I encourage my colleagues to advance the SAFER NET bill to help families protect their children from online predators by raising awareness, providing public information and improving the accessibility, coordination and efficiency of existing internet safety resources."

According to Highlights of the Youth Internet Safety Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, one in five children (10 to 17 years old) is sexually solicited online.

CONGRESSWOMAN MELISSA BEAN'S

TEN TIPS FOR SAFER INTERNET USE

1. Talk to kids about how and why they use the Internet. Monitor where they are surfing.

2. Keep your computer in a common room, and do not allow kids to use a webcam in their rooms.
3. Discourage children from posting photos or giving personal information in a chat room or on a website.
4. Urge children to report anything they see online that makes them scared or nervous.
5. Warn children about personally meeting any online contact. If they do, they should tell a parent, go to a public place and never go alone.
6. Record their user names and passwords, and remind children to always protect them.
7. Report messages that are suggestive or threatening. "Cyber bullying" is illegal.
8. Tell kids that not everything they read online is true. People online can and will misrepresent themselves.
9. Install the latest anti-virus and spyware programs to protect your computer and personal information, and download updates regularly.
10. Visit websites, like www.onguardonline.gov , www.fbi.gov , www.ftc.gov , and www.usdoj.gov for more ways to protect your family.

FACT SHEET ON CONGRESSWOMAN MELISSA BEAN'S LEGISLATION

H.R. 4982 "The SAFER NET ACT of 2006"

Safeguarding America's Families by Enhancing and Reorganizing New and Efficient Technologies

Online threats and internet crimes are a national problem deserving a national response.

However, currently there is no single entity at the Federal level charged with making internet safety a national priority.

Despite the fact that many federal, state, local and non-profit entities, along with commercial web sites, financial institutions, and tech companies all already provide internet information regarding cyber crime (ID theft, risky activities like MySpace, etc.)-the vast majority of these resources are unknown to Americans.

The Federal Trade Commission works with other agencies and private companies to promote the online safety site www.onguardonline.gov , however, this does not broadly coordinate and expand internet awareness. The goal of this bill is to streamline existing successful efforts to educate consumers and promote internet safety awareness.

The SAFER NET Act would coordinate a national response to online threats and promote internet safety by using and streamlining existing public and private resources across the country.

The SAFER NET Act would:

* Create a new Office of Internet Safety and Public Awareness at the FTC explicitly responsible for improving public awareness and education about internet safety. This office would be the primary federal contact on internet safety, serving as a resource and clearinghouse for consumers, the industry, and other internet safety initiatives. It would also work with other entities (federal, state, local, private) to reduce redundancy and promote best practices for promoting and ensuring internet safety. The office would also report to Congress annually on the state of internet safety, emerging threats, and the costs to the economy.

* Launch a national public awareness campaign to educate Americans about online threats and how to best protect themselves and their families from being the victims of online predators, financial schemes, ID theft, and more.

* Authorize federal grants to support efforts to promote internet safety conducted by qualifying entities like schools, non-profit organizations, state and local governments, law enforcement agencies, and businesses.

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